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Response Paper 2, “Big Blonde”

In “Big Blonde” by Dorothy Parker, we see the long slow paced decline of our story’s protagonist, Mrs. Hazel Morse, who tries to hide her melancholy personality by attempting to appease the men around her by being a “good sport” (1). Morse was described as being a big women; the kind of blonde that gets a lot of attention from men, which in her youth was something she saw as a desirable trait. As she aged she coveted the idea of marriage and quickly accepted an offer to a man to whom she thought she could be her true self and was no longer required to be a good sport. She soon realized that being herself was not an option because no one wanted to be around a sad girl. Her husband “became annoyed with her misty melancholies” (2) and after a few years of marriage he left her and she moved on to a string of unfulfilling love affairs where she didn’t mind their presence and didn’t mind them leaving. After a long time of the men in her life continuously making her repress her true personality she attempted suicide, to no avail, and the story ended with Morse severely unhappy, but still as complacent and obedience as ever. I argue that “Big Blonde” effectively demonstrates that there is a strong influence in the oppression and obedience of women because of their need for emotional and financial stability.

Morse’s character was very upfront about she opinion of what men wanted she said, “men liked you because you were fun, and when they liked you they took you out, and there you were”. (1). Women like Morse depended on men, and men had a certain image of how they want their women to behave. In return for the monetary backing and attention she was constantly reminded, “nobody wants to hear other peoples problems” and was repeatedly told to “be a sport and forget it” (7). Morse’s personal issues with dealing with her husbands abandonment and her alcoholism were set aside for her to deal with alone and was set up to be friendly and happy when in the company of others or faced being left by them or scorned by her friends for her behavior.

After a long string of affairs with men, who sought her presences but not her personality, she had been pushed down and repressed for so long, when she was truly saddened by the events outside of her power (i.e. the horse that got hurt in the street) her current “lover” told her to “sleep herself out of it (her gloomy state)” and “to cheer up” for the next time he would see her, to which she replied “Yes, I will.”(10). Unable to deal with being put down for so long and the idea that a never ending sleep would be such a relief, Morse overdosed on sleeping pills hoping that it would be an easy way to end her life. However the doctor from downstairs was able to revive her and bringing her back to the cold reality that even death couldn’t be and escape for her and she reluctantly accepted what her maid told her, to “cheer up, now.” (12). Ultimately, “Big Blonde” suggests that women are subject to repressing their true personalities and becoming obedient to maintain a level of security and stability in their lives despite their growing unhappiness.

My Question: Why is it that in a time period where women had received the right to vote and women’s liberation expanded, that some still remained stuck in the old ways? Why do women remain loyal and complacent to people when it just brings them unhappiness? Can they break the cycle or is it just a certain mindset that cannot be changed? What could Mrs. Morse have done to liberate herself after her husband left her?